



U.S. Soldiers escort a USAID developer to assess a well in Afghanistan

Our political system is too cumbersome to deal effectively with decisionmaking on the complex problems of the modern world. This problem may be irresolvable, but over the very long run, [it] could overwhelm everything else.

— Robert Rubin, 1993¹

However the specific problems are labeled, we believe they are symptoms of the Government's broader inability to adapt how it manages problems to the new challenges of the 21st century.

— The 9/11 Commission Report, 2004²

55th Signal Company (Thomas Bray)



A Goldwater-Nichols Act for the U.S. Government Institutionalizing the Interagency Process

By MARTIN J. GORMAN and ALEXANDER KRONGARD

By enhancing the authority of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the unified combatant commands, the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act created a major impetus for the military to operate more efficiently and effectively. There have been broad discussions about similar legislation for the Federal Government over the last year. In September 2004, General Peter Pace, USMC, Vice Chairman of

the Joint Chiefs of Staff, asked whether we needed a Goldwater-Nichols-like change for the interagency process. "Might we, at the national level, ask our Cabinet-level individuals to give up some of their day-to-day prerogatives and authority in a way that they will pick up in spades at the National Security Council level?"³ He proposed a "lead agency concept," in which the President would designate a department or agency that "would have the authority to tell folks in the Government in various agencies to get this job done."

Unfortunately, a Government-wide Goldwater-Nichols Act that

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relies on the lead agency concept would most likely fail in the absence of "joint" organizations throughout the Federal Government similar to the military's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the combatant commands that predated the 1986 act. In the absence

rather than seeking to unify knowledge and expertise, the Government as currently structured does the opposite

of organizations that operate jointly and high-ranking government officials dedicated to jointness, the lead agency concept would fall prey to the parochial power of the various departments and agencies, which in the end can choose to cooperate or not.

This article argues that a fundamental mismatch exists between the international threat environment and the current national security structure and that the lack of national-level joint interagency organizations undermines the ability of the United States to develop appropriate policies and implement comprehensive strategies. At a time when threats and problems are merging to develop deep, long-lasting

challenges to national security, America clings to a ponderous and stovepiped decisionmaking process that makes policy difficult to develop and even more difficult to implement. In short, when the Government confronts conflated or melded problems that are beyond

the capacity of any single department or agency to solve, it rarely develops comprehensive policies; instead, it poorly coordinates its actions, badly integrates its strategies, and fails to synchronize policy implementation.

Previous reform proposals from the National Commissions on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction, on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, on National Security/21st Century, and on the Roles and Capabilities of the U.S. Intelligence Community essentially retained the current structure of the executive branch. Unlike these proposals, this article examines transformation of the overall national security system. In particular, the decades-long focus on intelligence reform, while well-intentioned and not

without merit, obscures much more elementary flaws in the national security structure. These flaws in essence require passage of a 2005 National Security Act that combines an updated 1947 National Security Act and a Government-wide Goldwater-Nichols Act. This legislation would institutionalize the interagency process by mandating major structural and cultural changes to streamline the decisionmaking hierarchy and establish new methods and organizations that develop policy options, implement strategies, and integrate Government actions.

A Conflation of Problems

The pessimistic observations in the epigraphs above, written in 1993 and 2004, still ring true in examining the national security structure and process. Globalization, technological advances, and even American international preeminence have caused problems to meld and fuse together—sometimes purposefully, other times by chance. While past problems were complex, today, due to globalization, the communications revolution, and the ease of travel, there is an element of time compression that allows for this complexity and conflation to increase much faster. In addition, beyond the speed at which conflation occurs, the consequences of failing to address these problems both quickly and comprehensively are more severe. In today's international environment, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the potential for economic disruption, the possibility of massive migration, and the rise of cyber threats raise the stakes of the Government's inability to make decisions effectively.

This phenomenon of problem conflation is illustrated by Stephen Humphreys. While outlining the interrelated problems of economic stagnation, weakness in the international arena, political instability, and ideological confusion in the Middle East, Humphreys holds that "each of these problems has its own history and to a considerable degree can be



U.S. Customs and Border Protection (Gerald L. Nino)

analyzed separately. But it is perfectly clear that each is thoroughly implicated in all the others and that no one of them can be solved in isolation.”⁴

Three headline issues of today—global terrorism, the insurgency in Iraq, and the Southeast Asian tsunami—reveal the impact of the conflation principle:

■ The threat of global terrorism goes beyond the ethno-nationalist definitions used in the 1980s. As the United States looks beyond 9/11, it is the linkages of other problems to global terrorism that reveal its complexity: proliferation, technology, corruption, and illegal migration join to cause a security problem unheralded in American history.

■ Iraq was once viewed as a problem stemming from a brutal rogue dictator who needed to be overthrown, with America’s highest priority being the capture of Saddam Hussein and his top 54 leaders. Today, the situation has become much different and increasingly problematic. The linkages of historic ethnic rivalries, religious animosity, regional competition, and global terrorism create a problem of deep, long-lasting complexity that challenges the fortitude and capabilities of the mightiest nation in the world.

■ Even the December 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia cannot be seen as an exclusively humanitarian tragedy. While the disaster affected many countries, the United States paid particular attention to Indonesia, to include deploying the *Abraham Lincoln* carrier group off its coast to aid in disaster relief. A nation whose populace strongly dislikes U.S. policies on the global war on terror (GWOT) and Iraq, Indonesia is the largest Muslim country. The American response to the tsunami thus went beyond straightforward provision of disaster aid to highlight the larger problems of Indonesian attitudes toward America, international perceptions of American attitudes toward Muslims, and ultimately the implications of these problems for global Islamic terrorism. Indeed, then-Secretary of State Colin Powell openly spoke about this connection when he noted that U.S. aid for tsunami-stricken countries could demonstrate that “America is not an anti-Islamic, anti-Muslim nation.”⁵

Condoleezza Rice, President Bush’s then-National Security Adviser, described the challenges the United States faced in devising integrated strategies to these conflated problems in her testimony to the 9/11 Commission:

*America’s al Qaeda policy wasn’t working because our Afghanistan policy wasn’t working. And our Afghanistan policy wasn’t working because our Pakistan policy wasn’t working. We recognized that America’s counterterrorism policy had to be connected to our regional strategies and to our overall foreign policy.*⁶

Despite the events of September 11, creation of the Department of Homeland Security, reports from both the WMD and 9/11 Commissions, and the recently enacted Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, the United States remains poorly prepared to respond to such complex security challenges.

A Mismatch Between Structure and Threats

America has fundamentally mismatched its national security structure to today’s conflated problems. The mismatch is illustrated by biologist E.O. Wilson, who wrote that humans generally divide knowledge into component parts, using the example of environmental policy, ethics, biology, and social science. While each subject is closely connected, each also has “its own practitioners, language, modes of analysis, and standards of validation,” which results in confusion when people attempt to pass knowledge or inference from one subject area to another.⁷

Wilson postulated a center point where the four quadrants meet, where most real world problems exist, and where fundamental analysis is most needed. He indicated that the most fundamental need in analysis in this intersection of various subjects is imagination—eerily foreshadowing complaints of the 9/11 reports about a lack of imagination in the Government approach to terrorism.⁸ According to Wilson, only with imagination can one move between these disparate topics and develop soundly based policies.

If Wilson’s quadrants are relabeled *economics, diplomacy, military, information, intelligence, law enforcement*, or any other national security-related field,

concentrating analysis on this intersecting area represents a first step in addressing conflated problems. Unfortunately, rather than seeking to unify knowledge and expertise, the Government as currently structured does the opposite, continuing to divide knowledge into component parts by first deconstructing national security issues and then parcelling most of the parts to individual departments and agencies. Even before allocating problems, it is clear that some portions of these problems do not neatly parallel the national security structure and, therefore, are not addressed as part of an integrated and comprehensive strategy.

An example of this phenomenon is opium production in Afghanistan. Because this issue was not clearly a defense, diplomatic, or law enforcement matter, it fell between the cracks of U.S. departments and agencies. Hence, it was not addressed in the initial year of Operation *Enduring Freedom*. As a result, despite the threat the opium industry represents to political stability in Afghanistan, production rose twenty-fold since the fall of the Taliban in December 2001 and accounts for 40 to 60 percent of Afghanistan’s economic output.⁹ Yet increased instability in Afghanistan or the failure of the Hamid Karzai government would be a major setback for American foreign policy goals and national security. Nevertheless, once component parts of national security problems are parceled out, the responsible departments and agencies devise separate solutions to their assigned portions.

This stovepiped decisionmaking results in a piecemeal U.S. response to most international issues. Under the current arrangement, these independent solutions vary in sequence and intensity and sometimes conflict. After surviving the intradepartmental process, these separate solutions enter the interagency process and eventually make their way to the highest levels of government. Called “policy hill” by Robert Cutler, President Dwight Eisenhower’s National Security Adviser,

this process means that only at the highest level do actual integration, coordination, and synchronization occur. In testimony before the 9/11 Commission, Secretary Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice testified that it took over 7 months to formulate a coherent, regionally based counterterrorism strategy that was originally scheduled to be briefed to the Principals Committee the week of September 11. This delay occurred despite realization of the urgency for a coordinated, multifaceted strategy to confront the imminent threat posed by al Qaeda.

An additional problem is the governmental culture that rewards parochialism through promotion and opportunity, stovepipes divergent expertise, and wastes resources by producing unnecessary redundancies. The interagency battles that rage today within the national security community often focus more on bureaucratic self-interest and resource allocation than on strategies to combat threats to national security. Security personnel thus operate in a system where cooperation and integration are often not championed and where career development is focused on intradepartmental proficiency rather than more comprehensive or substantive expertise. A byproduct of this culture has been the Government's inability to attract high-level personnel. Polls indi-

dermine America's ability to respond to complex, long-term threats, such as terrorism and other security, economic, environmental, and demographic problems that will increasingly merge. Where once the United States could deconstruct problems and make distinctions between their component parts, it must now look for unifying threads. Only then is it possible to weave strategies to deal with such issues.

Back to Fundamentals

While the 9/11 Commission report clearly identified problems throughout the Government that handicapped the effort to prevent the terrorist attacks, it ultimately failed to address these problems thoroughly because of its focus primarily on the Intelligence Community and the counterterrorism effort. The Intelligence Community is sorely in need of reform, but its reform must start with the broader national security apparatus. As with the 9/11 Commission, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act did not address the broader problems in the national security structure and process, but focused on the Intelligence Community in isolation.

The 9/11 report recommendations and legislation are not, however, without merit. In chapter 13, the commission gives a glimpse into the solution to this strategic mismatch between threat and structure. While much of

the attention has focused on establishment of the National Counterterrorism Center and creation of a Director

of National Intelligence, the 9/11 Commission actually highlighted a broader and more insightful approach to national security reform and restructuring. The 9/11 report proposed the establishment of comprehensive national centers focused "for example, on counterproliferation, crime, and narcotics, and China."¹² Unfortunately, the commission still stovepiped such centers into the Intelligence Commu-

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cate that a whole segment of America's most intelligent and capable citizens see Government service as unappealing and that the September 11 attacks did not change this attitude.

Although the current national security structure and culture have remained effective for many decades, they cannot compete with today's more creative, sinister, and capable enemies. Structural and cultural flaws un-

nity, a fatal flaw if the United States is to seriously address the mismatch between structure/process and threat. The recent WMD report, following the 9/11 Commission lead, also recommended creation of a National Counterproliferation Center, but again focused solely on the Intelligence Community.

Rather than retaining the intelligence focus and remaining dependent on the current primacy of the departments and agencies, this paper proposes a new national security structure that makes interagency coordination and integration a daily event. Any proposal that would seriously address the mismatch between conflated threats and current stovepiped structures must push integrated strategy development to lower levels of the executive branch rather than leaving it at the highest levels, such as the Principals Committee or the National Security Council. In addition, such a structure must take an interagency approach to overseeing implementation of U.S. policy and strategy rather than relying on the various departments and agencies to manage their separate pieces. By delegating strategy development to lower levels and taking an interagency approach to overseeing implementation, the Government could become more effective in responding to complex, long-term threats. To accomplish this, the national security structure should be rebuilt as follows:

- The United States should create national-level, joint interagency issue-focused organizations that bring together the relevant policy, military, intelligence, and other parts of the Government (such as law enforcement agencies and the Departments of Treasury, Commerce, and Customs Service). These structures would collocate personnel for specific issues under one organization and one senior leader, prioritize interagency cooperation, integrate comprehensive policy options, monitor corresponding strategies, and focus resources, particularly expertise.

- The primacy of the current departments and agencies involved in national security should be lowered. These organizations would assume a role similar to the military services and become responsible for training and equipping the personnel



Japanese Minister of Defense speaking about diplomacy and deterrence in responding to weapons of mass destruction in the Asia-Pacific region at conference in Singapore

on developing comprehensive and integrated national-level foreign policy and military planning.

The military also provides models of organizing and operating jointly. Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-South) provides a model of an interagency construct that fuses military, law enforcement, and intelligence operations into a unified organization under one leader. It has the additional benefit of having strong links to allies in the fight against narcotics. The interagency composition of JIATF-South is apparent by its membership, which includes the Departments of Defense, Transportation (Coast Guard), and Treasury, along with the Customs Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Defense Intelligence Agency, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and National Security Agency. In addition, Britain, France, and the Netherlands provide ships, aircraft, and liaison officers, and the Netherlands commands one of its task groups. Since 1999, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela also have assigned liaison officers to JIATF-East. The result is a fully integrated, international task force organized to capitalize on the various agencies and countries involved and with fused intelligence and operations.

In the end, however, Embassies and JIATFs illustrate that the proposed interagency organizations rest on a long American tradition of approaching complex problems in an integrated and comprehensive way. The lack of similar interagency structures at the national level is the vital piece missing from this tradition. This proposal blends the concept of Embassies, which are primarily policy-focused, and JIATFs, which are primarily execution-focused, into issue-oriented organizations in Washington. Such organizations would provide a powerful, synergistic force combining the relevant expertise, integrated

seconded to the interagency bodies. Their personnel would rotate between their home organizations and the new organizations just as military officers serve within their own services and also in joint organizations.

■ In the new structure, the National Security Adviser should concentrate on providing separate and independent advice to the President. As currently structured, the adviser has the two often-incompatible roles of supporting the President and being an honest broker among the competing interests of the departments and agencies. Under this proposal, the National Security Adviser would play the former role in the interagency process.

■ A permanent executive or governing board, comprised of the senior leadership (under secretaries and above) from the departments and agencies, should be established. It would be similar to how the service chiefs sit on JCS while retaining their service roles. This board would allow for better policy formulation and strategy implementation by the executive branch—moving away from unity of effort in managing the Intelligence Community toward unity of effort in managing the national security structure.

National Interagency Organizations: A Tradition

While this proposal may sound extreme, it would simply apply to Washington bureaucracies the same organizational principles the Federal Government applies to itself elsewhere. While many think of jointness exclusively as a military concept, it can in fact be considered an American tradition. One of the oldest institutions in

the Government has always operated as an interagency group under the authority of a single, high-level individual appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate: the U.S. Embassy overseas. The chief of mission heads the mission's country team of U.S. Government personnel. Responsibilities of chiefs of mission at post also include:

- speaking with one voice on U.S. policy and ensuring mission staff do likewise while providing the President and Secretary of State expert guidance and frank counsel
- directing and coordinating all executive branch offices and personnel
- cooperating with the legislative and judicial branches so foreign policy goals are advanced.

Meanwhile, the country team consists of the heads of the principal sections of the Embassy and the heads of all other Government agency offices in the mission. This includes the traditional foreign affairs elements, such as State, Commerce, Agriculture, the Central Intelligence Agency, and all other Government elements, such as the Agency for International Development, military assistance groups, and Peace Corps. In essence, the proposed organizations would become the Washington-based equivalent to country teams, fusing all the relevant players in a topic area into a single organization under a high-level leader. This organization would then focus

1st Combat Camera Squadron (Cherie A. Thurley)

intelligence, and necessary policy and operational authorities to approach national security problems holistically and to leverage these disparate groups to develop, propose, and implement integrated, comprehensive strategies on a daily basis at levels lower than the National Security Council.

Reform Models

Significant transformational reform is never easy. As mentioned earlier, the two best models are the 1947 National Security Act and the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act. Both confronted many structural and cultural problems similar to today's and faced strident, long-term, parochial opposition from within the Government itself.

A review of the impact of the 1947 and 1986 acts reveals that this proposed reform should be considered seriously. The National Security Act revamped the national security structure, creating the:

- National Security Council and staff
- Department of Defense
- Air Force
- Central Intelligence Agency.

Taking a different approach, Goldwater-Nichols systematically changed the roles and authorities of existing

while many think of jointness exclusively as a military concept, it can be considered an American tradition

institutions while developing incentives and disincentives to alter how the military acts and operates. As such, it:

- empowered the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff by making him the principal military adviser to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense

- clarified that the operational chain of command runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the combatant commanders

- centralized operational authority through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs as opposed to the service chiefs

- required that forces under the juris-

diction of the services be assigned to the combatant commands, with the exception of those assigned to perform the mission of the military departments

- mandated that the services provide their best personnel to the Joint Staff.

In essence, Goldwater-Nichols legally strengthened the role of existing organizations such as the Joint Staff and combatant commands, lowered the primacy of others such as the military services, and provided incentives such as promotions to those who supported the strengthened organizations.

Congress: A Key Ally for Change

Besides providing evidence from history that significant structural and cultural changes can be implemented in the Government, the 1947 and 1986 acts also show the necessity for Presidential leadership. The President must articulate both the threats to the Nation and a vision of how to respond. Equally important, these models show the need for executive-legislative cooperation for any proposal to change the national security system. Obviously, Congress would enact any legislation, appropriate the funding for new organizations, and oversee implementation. Together, the President and Congress could carefully plan and carry out the above pro-

posal in phases over an extended time. For example, they could start with an expanded National Counterterrorism Center, followed by a National Counterproliferation Center and perhaps a National Asia Center. While the role of Congress cannot be minimized, five issues stand out for congressional involvement:

- Most importantly, Congress must deliberate carefully over the creation of an executive/governing board and the role of its Presidentially appointed executive director. The Founding Fathers purposely opted not to have a prime minister in the Federal system, believing that one derived from Congress would give the legislature too much power over the executive. Depending on how the role is defined, the executive director could closely resemble a prime

minister. This is not to say such a position should not be established. Perhaps in the modern world, a prime minister-like Federal position would call greater attention to the workings of the government and the development and implementation of strategies in such a complex international environment. In addition, this proposal—which makes the executive director a Presidential appointment versus someone from Congress—may obviate the Founding Fathers' concerns.

- In addition, given that the original role of the National Security Adviser as counselor to the President and honest broker in the interagency would be divided between two positions under this concept, Congress should consider granting the executive director some level of executive privilege to protect the private discussions among the President, the adviser, and himself. While uncommon in positions confirmed by the Senate, limited executive privilege would allow for free discussion on national security issues among these three principals.

- Separate and appropriate funding of the new interagency organizations is critical. Congress would need to create a system to authorize and appropriate the budgets to make these organizations both successful and relatively independent of the current departments and agencies. As such, the role of the interagency organization leaders requires clarification, and careful consideration must be given to what authorities are granted to the leadership, whether they are confirmed by the Senate, and how they interact with the departments and agencies.

- Congress must consider establishing and funding a process that bundles together education, interagency rotations, and promotions over the course of a career in national security. Much like career military officers, national security personnel should attend professional education and be assigned inside interagency organizations and outside their departments or agencies. In particular, promotion for certain types of careers should be based on meeting these objectives. In support of this cultural change, a professional education infrastructure for national security professionals must be created—equivalent to the military's professional military education system.

- Finally, Congress must examine how to adapt itself to the changes proposed here and improve its appropriate oversight of national security so as to be more efficient and effective. While this paper has examined the 1947 and 1986 acts as models of change, the authors are equally aware that the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created the Department of Homeland Security, and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, which created the Director of National Intelligence, might represent

models of less successful reform, particularly in regard to congressional involvement and oversight. In both cases, pertinent questions were left undebated and unanswered, and the burden of legislative oversight of the executive branch increased unnecessarily. For example, according to a joint task force of the Center for Strategic and International Studies and Business Executives for National Security, 79 congressional committees and subcommittees have some amount of jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security.¹⁴

Is It Worth It?

At one time, this article was titled "Constant Focus: Institutionalizing the Interagency Process," reflecting the authors' view that the current national security structure undercuts the President's ability to respond quickly

the 1947 and 1986 acts show the need for executive-legislative cooperation for any proposal to change the national security system

and effectively to international threats. The Founding Fathers saw an energetic President as essential to the security of the new Nation. *In Federalist Paper 70*, Alexander Hamilton wrote, "Energy

in the executive is a leading character in the definition of good government. It is essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks."¹⁵ Given the President's multiple roles in national security, domestic affairs, economic issues, and party politics, he cannot retain constant focus on national security as originally envisioned in the Constitution. Thus, the proposal outlined leverages the long experience of the State Department in integrating policy and experience of the military in planning and operating jointly to help the Presidency recapture the energy the Founding Fathers intended.

This article argues that two things must happen to regain this energy. The first is legislation mandating structural and cultural change: a 2005 National Security Act that equates to a combined updated 1947 National Security Act and an interagency version of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act. This legislation would institutionalize the interagency process through new organizations and reward jointness by selectively promoting those who participate in interagency policy development and

implementation of integrated strategies. The second is an executive/governing board led by an executive director with powers to develop policy, integrate interagency efforts, and monitor implementation of Presidentially approved strategies on a day-to-day basis. This approach would improve national security by:

■ *Improving the development of policy.* The new interagency organizations should provide the President, in a timelier and more comprehensive manner, with better policy options, tailored to complex and conflated threats.

■ *Enhancing implementation of strategy.* The creation of the new executive/governing board and a Presidentially appointed executive director should allow the executive branch to better implement national strategy.

■ *Developing a culture of interagency cooperation.* Accompanying the structural changes would be a more gradual cultural transformation that, over time, creates *strategic practitioners*, a cadre of professionals who combine divergent expertise on the military, economic, diplomatic, information, and cultural aspects of national security that currently resides in separate stove-piped organizations.

■ *Achieving better balance between the military and the other instruments of power.* Since the Cold War, America's use of its military has dominated the national security system, particularly given the military's geographic organization into regional combatant commands that cut across nation-state boundaries. Other departments lack such broad reach and equivalent resources, causing overreliance on the Armed Forces to achieve policy goals when other instruments might have been more appropriate. The creation of these new Federal interagency organizations and the executive governing board would provide a similar regional and global structure that could better harness and direct all national power and balance the Nation's use of its diplomatic, military, informational, and economic instruments.

■ *Building a partnership between intelligence producers and policymakers.* The implementation of this proposal would improve the cooperation between intelligence producers, policymakers, the military, and other Government officials in devising stronger national security policy and strategy by integrating the pertinent components from across the Intelligence Community into the appropriate national-level interagency organizations.



Defense officials taking questions from the 9/11 Commission on Capitol Hill, March 23, 2004

1st Combat Camera Squadron (Jerry Morrison)

Sailors stack bales of cocaine aboard USS *Crommelin* seized during a drug interdiction mission with a U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment



U.S. Navy (Eric Weber)

Finally, given the reality of future budgetary and fiscal constraints, the new organization provides a framework to eventually streamline the entire national security apparatus. Once expertise is collocated and a new cadre of strategic practitioners is developed, the need to replicate roles across departments and agencies will be reduced and resource sharing will be enhanced.

While this paper has focused on the application of jointness in developing and implementing national security strategy, it is ultimately a model applicable to the wider effort supporting homeland security and to the overall structure of the Government, including its domestic and economic components.

JFQ

NOTES

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